

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, TEGUCIGALPA

418

DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

May 5, 1961

DATE

REF :

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	REC'D	IN F O OTHER
	AAA-4	ARM/19-2 ENR-7 REPT P-3 L-2 IO-4
	5/13	CIA-10 USIA-10 OSD-5 army-4 navy-4

SUBJECT: Honduran Census on Swan Islands. air-6 NSA-4 COM-10 INT-7

While the factual report on the above subject must come from the United States personnel on Swan Islands, the following colorful sidelights, available to this Embassy, may be of value.

The extension of Honduras' national census to the Swan Islands was undertaken at the behest of the President himself, in his awareness of the fact that his opposition, both from the Right and from the Left, would raise a hue and cry if he omitted to do so. Wilfredo CISNEROS being a responsible member of the Census office, he was selected for the task partly because of his suitable name (Cisne is "swan" in Spanish).

Cisneros proceeded to the North Coast by air and to the island of Roatan by boat on April 29, but found in Roatan that the captains of suitable boats to take him to the Swan Islands refused to do so for anything like the ordinary price for a trip of that distance. The Embassy's first information was that the captains would not go at any price, but, in the event, it proved necessary for the President of Honduras merely to add 600 Lempiras (\$300.00) from the President's Special Fund, after which Cisneros found a boat capable of taking him to the Swans.

On Roatan, Cisneros was joined by Arturo Lopez Cisneros, no relative, but carrying out the pun of the original selection. He also took along three individuals as "technicians". According to information given the Embassy, by the ICA advisor to the Honduran National Census and Statistics Bureau, Cisneros' boat was escorted to the Swan Islands from some distance off-shore by the U. S. Coast Guard. Cisneros reported upon returning to Tegucigalpa that the individuals on the island were all very courteous, but that 33 of them, all of whom appeared to be Americans, refused politely to give any information, whereas the remaining 33, of a total of 66, proved to be largely from the Cayman Islands and therefore to be of British nationality. Cisneros told the Honduran Census Bureau that among the second group there were "a few Hondurans". It may be assumed that he believed some of the second group to be natives of the Bay Islands of Honduras, who are very similar in speech

cc: ARA/OAP

ABFranklin/jum

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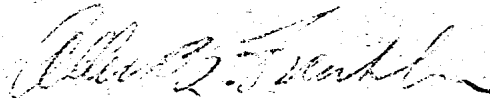
From Tegucigalpa

(English), color, and general appearance to the British citizens of Belize, Jamaica, and the Cayman Islands.

Upon the completion of the census of the Swan Islands, the salary of the Director of the Honduran census was reduced from 1,000 lempiras a month to 700 lempiras, although no connection between these two facts can be observed. Similar reductions were received by other members of the Census Bureau.

In a conversation the evening of May 4, 1961, with the reporting officer, the Director of the Honduran Census appeared to be unaware that the United States actually claims sovereignty over the Swan Islands, stating that it had been his impression that the dispute concerning the Islands was based on the activities of U. S. personnel on the Islands, but that he had not known that the United States actually claimed sovereignty there. If he was feigning ignorance, he made a very good job of it, so that the reporting officer felt it necessary to state quite clearly that the United States believes that it possesses a good and legal claim to sovereignty in the Swan Islands. Even then the Director wore an incredulous expression.

For the Ambassador:



Albert B. Franklin  
Counselor of Embassy

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